

[MUSIC PLAYING]

GODFREY BOYLE: Welcome, and congratulations on deciding to study our renewable energy course. We're at the Open University's main catering hub, which incorporates a variety of renewable energy sources. For the next eight weeks, we'll be exploring answers to the key course question- Can renewable energy power the world?

We start with the sun, that huge energy source in the sky that powers most of the renewable energies we use here on Earth. And we'll be using a variety of media- text, stills, video, graphics- to help you understand the renewable energy sources. We'll look at each renewable energy and technology in turn- its physical principles, its environmental impact, and its economics. And we look at how a combination of renewable energy sources could provide the energy needs of the UK or the European countries and the world as a whole. And at the end of each week, there's a quiz to help you test your understanding of the topics we've covered.

When you've studied the course, you should be able to give your own answers to the question- under what conditions can renewable energy power my country or the world? We very much hope we've aroused your interest in the subject. So we'll be giving you links to further sources of information to enable you to explore in more detail the topics we've covered.